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TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS I2
SUBJECT: CG AND DCM MEET IRAQI PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary. The Commanding General and Deputy Chief of Mission met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki March 3 to discuss progress on the Baghdad Security Plan, reconciliation efforts, and sovereignty issues. The CG and PM agreed that there was optimism on the streets of Baghdad, though the PM lamented that he still struggled with how to control suicide bombers. The CG briefed the PM on the 'soft knock' strategy for securing Sadr City, except when going after targets responsible for coalition deaths. The CG told the Prime Minister that he had put a halt on raids in Sadr City temporarily to set the conditions for the emplacement of the first Joint Security Station there. He also suggested that the PM look at trying to demobilize the Facilities Protection Services (FPS) associated with the Ministry of Health, which the PM and National Security Advisor (who was also in attendance) both agreed was a good idea. The PM asked the CG to allow Iraqis to arrest Iraqi Security Force members, when necessary, versus having the coalition conduct these arrests. He told the CG and DCM that Sunnis lacked a strong leader, and that this limited their ability to reenter civil society. Finally, the DCM briefed the PM on the Georgian desire to send more troops to Iraq, and suggested that the GOI might want to issue a statement of support, to which the PM agreed. End Summary.

¶2. (S) The CG told PM Maliki that he walked through the Sharja Market in Baghdad, only weeks after a bomb ripped through it. He was impressed with how well it had rebounded, and credited the physical security measures put in place with creating this environment. The PM agreed; he knew that merchants complained about all of the barriers, but in the end their lives were more important than the inconveniences rendered by increased security. Additionally, the PM pitched for the need for electronic bomb detecting equipment for all of the 28 checkpoints surrounding Baghdad. Currently, Baghdad province had five, which would be distributed to the most strategic locations.

¶3. (S) The CG said his forces were taking a 'soft knock' approach in Sadr City. The PM agreed with this tact. It strengthened the moderates within the Sadr movement, he said, and helped empower the mayor of Sadr City - who the CG acknowledged was working well with coalition forces. It also would help set the conditions for the formation of a Joint Security Station in Sadr City. Raids might still be necessary, the CG admitted, but only to go after those responsible for killing coalition troops.

¶3. (S) The PM was happy with the progress made so far under the "Law and Order" iteration of the Baghdad Security Plan. He cited reduced assassinations and kidnappings as building national unity and marginalizing terrorists and gangs, but struggled still with how to stem individual suicide bombers. He also warned that any incident akin to the Samarra Golden

Dome bombing of February 2006 would completely derail the plan. Al-Qaeda and the hardcore Baathists remained the largest problem. The PM also raised a concern about arresting Iraqi Security Force members involved in criminal activities. While the PM understood the need for these actions, he asked that the GOI be notified and given the opportunity to make these arrests. Having CF arrest ISF was "demoralizing", he said.

¶ 14. (S) The Sunnis lacked a credible leader, the PM said, and this was holding them back. The Kurds had two leaders in Talabani and Massoud Barzani and two strong parties (PUK and KDP); the Shia, for all of their problems, had leaders too. But the Sunnis did not, and this was keeping them from forging a national identity. He said that he had recently been visited by two investigative judges, who presented the PM with 130 complaints against mainstay Sunni CoR member Adnan Dulaimy (IIP). Dulaimy was a problem; he also recalled Dulaimy's unhelpful comments from Turkey, when Dulaimy called on Iraq's Arab neighbors to support the Sunni struggle in Iraq. Dulaimy's IIP, meanwhile, was not well-liked in Anbar province, a Sunni stronghold. In the meantime, the PM would be hosting a conference for former regime soldiers and officers on March 4, with the goal being to sign up those eligible for pensions and reintegrate others. This was a positive step for reconciliation.

¶ 15. (S) The CG suggested that the PM kickstart DDR efforts by demobilizing and reintegrating the Ministry of Health FPS starting with those guarding the Medical City in Baghdad. The PM said he too was concerned, and had ordered the formation of a committee to look into the FPS earlier in the day. The same committee, he briefed, would be responsible for tackling militias. It was to be comprised of the Deputy Minister of the Interior for Administration, a member from the PM's office, a Ministry of Defense representative, and a military intelligence representative. Major General Wajih would direct the committee.

¶ 16. (S) The PM told the CG and DCM that the judges he met with complained of U.S. interference in their interrogations at an MOJ detention facility, Hathiya Prison in Mansour. They told of U.S. soldiers bringing cell phones to detainees and preventing interrogators from pursuing lines of questioning. The DCM said that the US would look into these allegations. However, the US had a strong desire not to see the bad practices witnessed at other Iraqi detention facilities in the past repeated. The PM replied that he believed the judicial system was improving; judges were moving quickly through files, releasing those it could and prosecuting others. The Ministry of Human Rights was also tasked with visiting detention facilities to prevent and/or report abuses. The CG asked for specifics and said that he would look into the allegations.

¶ 17. (S) The DCM reported to the PM the desire of Georgian President Saakashvili to announce March 4 that Georgia would be sending 2750 additional soldiers to aid the coalition. The DCM suggested that the GOI might wish to issue a statement welcoming this gesture. The PM agreed, but warned against a Georgian statement implying that the forces were needed because the GOI was unable to provide for the needs of its citizens. The DCM assured him that this would not be the tone of Saakashvili's announcement.

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